

Table 2. Retail Pharmacists and Average Hourly Workload by AHEC Region, 2008

AHEC Region	Total Population	Number of Retail Pharmacists	Average Prescriptions Filled per Retail Pharmacist per Hour
Area L	301,094	136	14.4
Charlotte	1,701,378	945	11.6
Eastern	956,466	444	14.1
Greensboro	1,088,392	519	15.5
Mountain	714,325	406	11.3
Northwest	1,524,295	761	14.1
South East	455,190	267	12.4
Southern Regional	868,197	316	14.9
Wake	1,560,428	818	11.7
North Carolina	9,227,016	4,621	13.2

Source: Prescription data include total dispensed prescriptions from retail channels (chain, mass merchandiser, food store, independent pharmacies); Xponent™, January 2008-December 2008, IMS Health Incorporated. All Rights Reserved. See Data and Methodology section for additional information. Pharmacist data from the North Carolina Health Professions Data System with data derived from the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy; data include active, instate pharmacists licensed in North Carolina as of October 31, 2008, using average hours per week as reported by pharmacists at time of license renewal.

Table 2 describes the regional variation in average prescriptions filled per retail pharmacist per hour. On average in 2008, retail pharmacists in Mountain AHEC filled 11.3 prescriptions per hour, while retail pharmacists in Greensboro AHEC were filling 15.5 prescriptions per hour.

Hospital Workforce Surveys

Each year, the North Carolina Hospital Association (NCHA) surveys their member hospitals to collect data on the North Carolina hospital workforce. The following data were gathered from published reports and unpublished, preliminary data for 2009.¹²

Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians make up approximately 2% of all hospital workers in the state. Vacancy rates for hospital pharmacists hover near or above the vacancy rate for all hospital professions. Two factors that point to difficulties in hiring hospital workers are average days to fill vacant positions and cost to recruit for a position. On average, it takes over three months to recruit a pharmacist to a vacant hospital position, and from 2004-2008, pharmacists took the longest to recruit. Pharmacists are also one of the professions with the highest recruitment costs in North Carolina hospitals, where an average of \$11,325 was spent to recruit a pharmacist in 2004; that figure fluctuates from year to year, but rose to approximately \$18,000 in 2008, \$14,000 in 2009. In rural counties, it is more expensive and takes longer to recruit a pharmacist than in urban counties. In 2008 it cost \$1,000 more to recruit a pharmacist to hospitals in rural counties, and it took 63 days longer to fill a rural position.

¹² Fraher EP, McKethan A, Broome SJ, Haygood MK, Heilig KE. North Carolina Hospital Workforce Trends Analysis, 2004-2006. North Carolina Hospital Association. July 2008; Broome SJ. 2008 NCHA Workforce Report. North Carolina Hospital Association. April 2009; Preliminary 2009 hospital workforce data provided by Dr. Sarah Broome, Director of Economic Research, North Carolina Hospital Association, Cary, NC. Data based on the annual NCHA workforce survey for 2009. The survey had a response rate of 76%. Missing responses imputed based on total licensed beds.